

but the markets which they could reach by that route would hardly be profitable. Their main object was to reach their home town Philadelphia. Overland transportation, because of its prohibitive cost, was out of the question, and railroads, of course, were a thing of the future. A route by water was the only solution.

They mined a small quantity of coal in 1815 and, during the spring of 1816, an attempt was made to float a raft load of this coal down Jones Creek, a tributary of the Wallenpaupack, but fortune was not with them for the raft struck some rocks and was quickly broken up. Although the accounts are somewhat vague and contradictory, they seem to have succeeded in hauling a small quantity over the old Wyoming Road the following year, rafting it down the Wallenpaupack to the falls where it was unloaded, hauled to the Lackawaxen near Paupack Eddy and again loaded on a raft for the long voyage to Philadelphia. Whether or not the raft load ever completed the hazardous voyage is a mystery, but in any event the impracticable Wallenpaupack route seems to have been abandoned in favor of the route through Rixe's Gap and Cherry Ridge to the banks of the Lackawaxen River near the present site of White Mills. A substantial quantity of coal was hauled over this route during the winter months when there was sufficient snow to permit the use of sledges. (Wagons if they had been available could not have been used over the roads which then existed.)

#### Shipments Were Small

The accounts vary as to the quantity of coal mined and the quantity actually hauled to the Lackawaxen. It was probably about sixty tons, although some estimate as high as one hundred. However, between 1816 and 1822 a considerable quantity of this coal was successfully rafted to Philadelphia and sold, but there seems to be no record of the total quantity to reach that city, or of the quantity carried on each raft. We know that rafts containing in excess of 20,000 feet of lumber had been going down the Lackawaxen for over half of century and there were many experienced pilots available but then again, managing a lumber raft where the entire load was buoyant was a different matter from handling a raft with a dead weight load of coal.

The many hardships which beset the Wurts brothers do not seem to have discouraged them for they were ever on the lookout for a better route. In April, 1818, Maurice wrote to Colonel Seeley, of Wayne County, to inquire about the turnpike road he contemplated building through Rixe's Gap to a junction with the Long Ridge Road near the present site of Honesdale. Wurts asked for particular information concerning the practicability of using sledges, and for informa-

tion concerning spring and fall freshets on the Lackawaxen.

#### Canal Route Surveyed

Maurice while traversing the valley of the Delaware many times came to know of the broad valley which, in prehistoric times, connected the Delaware and Hudson Rivers. He explored this valley following the Neversink River north, then crossing the Summit he followed Rondout Creek down

to the Hudson at Kingston. Here was a route over which a canal might be built enabling them to reach the New York market where they would not have to meet the growing competition of the Schuylkill and Lehigh coal fields.

Maurice undertook a hasty survey of the route to satisfy himself and his brothers that the route was practicable. The residents of the valley hearing of his plans welcomed him enthusiastically.

Great progress had been made on the Erie Canal and people were aroused to the value of canals. To heighten their interest the Wurts advertised widely in the local papers.

Benjamin Wright had gained great prestige as chief engineer of the Erie Canal when Maurice Wurts approached him with the proposition that he make a detailed survey of their route. Although Wright was unable to come himself he sent two of his younger associates, John B. Mills and Edward Sullivan.

From the survey made by these two men a map was prepared and widely circulated in New York and Philadelphia financial circles. It was a copy of this map that first brought the enterprise to the attention of one of the most influential men of the time, Philip Hone. Hone immediately became interested in the proposition and his name alone gave assurance to others that the venture was likely to succeed.

Shortly before this map was published there was a proposal that the canal be carried through the Shawangunk Mountains in a tunnel and thence across New Jersey. Nothing came of the proposal but it brought forth immediate scathing comments from the Kingston (N. Y.) Plebian for July 16, 1823, and at the launching of the first boat at Summitville, four years later the hard feeling was revived when a toast was drunk to "the enemies of the D. and H. Canal, like the projectors of the tunneling of the Shawangunk Mountains, may they find they reward in disappointment and their glory in infamy."

#### Legal Approval For Canal

While John Wurts did not have the personal magnetism of Philip Hone, he nevertheless was no stranger to politics (he later became a member of the Pennsylvania Legislature). Seemingly without opposition, he obtained from the State of Pennsylvania for his

brother Maurice and his heirs and assigns authorization to improve the navigation of the Lackawaxen River. This act was approved by the General Assembly, on March 13, 1823, and on April 23, the State of New York authorized the "Delaware and Hudson Canal Company" to construct a canal from Rondout (Kingston) on the Hudson River to Saw Mill Rift on the Delaware River. The route was to follow up Rondout Creek through the valley to the west of the Shawangunk Mountains, thence down the valley of the Neversink River to the Delaware. At the time no provisions were made for the continuation of the canal beyond that point. However, things were now taking shape and on December 7, 1823, a more thorough survey was begun, likewise under the direction of Benjamin Wright, who was still not free to come himself. This time a more mature man was in the party, which again included Mills and Edward Sullivan. He was Colonel John L. Sullivan, builder of the Middlesex Canal in Massachusetts, who was, according to a pamphlet published at the time, "one of a Board of internal improvement appointed by President Monroe under the late act of Congress," but his enthusiasm for the project, if we can judge from his letters, seems to indicate a more material interest.

On January 1, 1824, Colonel Sullivan reported to Wright that, between the terminus of the canal at Saw Mill Rift and the mouth of the Lackawaxen River, nine dams and locks would be required on the Delaware, and on the Lackawaxen itself at least seventeen dams would be required to make it navigable. It would seem from the Colonel's reference to Keens' Pond that he was even then thinking of an extension of the canal over at least part of the distance. He said in part, "Middle Creek (which enters the Lackawaxen at the present site of Hawley) heads even nearer the mines than Capt. Keens' Pond and may possibly afford a shorter and better route than the west (or main) branch of the Lackawaxen. He also reported that he had a quick survey of the "South Branch" (the Wallenpaupack) but did not find it favorable.

#### Wright Turns to D. & H.

Although Benjamin Wright continued in the service of the Erie Canal he apparently gave some personal attention to the D. & H. Canal during 1824, and as a result recommended extension of the canal up the Delaware and Lackawaxen Rivers to a point as near the mines as possible. Slackwater navigation on these swift rivers would not, he reported, permit the boats to carry a paying load. Further, owing to the yearly freshets these dams would have been too costly to maintain but most serious